

Laura Alice Malvin Pipes Farnell Hall

This is the story of my maternal, grandmother as best I can remember at this late date:-
Louise LaVerne (Hutchison) Olson, January 1998.

I believe Big Mama was of Welsh heritage. Triplet brothers named Pipes emigrated to the U.S. from Wales. One was her father. Big Mama was born about 1870 in Monroe Louisiana. She had two brothers who she always called Brother Joe and Brother Sam. Brother Sam was wealthy and owned a plantation. Brother Joe was the oldest and she was the baby sister.

Big Mama married Marshall Farnell about 1895. She was about 25 years old. I believe Marshall was a little younger. He was a carpenter by trade. They had four children: Ila Blanche, Glenn, Robin Scafe and Mary Lou. Marshall died about 1900 with kidney disease.

Big Mama's mother came to live with them and care for the children as Laura had to make a living to support her family. She worked as a dress maker for the wealthy. About 1902 Laura's Mother died and then her house burned down. Her sewing machine was destroyed in the fire. With no means of support she was desperate. She had to place the 4 children in an orphanage for a while. Mary Lou died there from a disease called "Bloody Flux." Glenn also died while she was still in Louisiana. Big Mama's two brothers never offered to help her in any way during all her troubles.

About 1906 she corresponded with Grandpa Hall. He was a widower with two children. She was desperate. With no means of support in Louisiana she came west and married Grandpa Hall, sight unseen. This was a marriage of convenience rather than love. I can never remember her referring to her husband except as Mr. Hall.

Her two kids, Blanche and Rob, were city kids. They had never lived on a farm. The new lifestyle was a shock to all of them.

Roy and Vera were Hall's two kids. Then Big Mama and Hall had 3 children. Paul, Otho and Olivette. Otho was born with "Down Syndrome" (Severe) and was never able to walk or talk. Grandpa Hall made him a playpen. This was where he lived his life. Otho died in the flu epidemic of 1919. I remember seeing his little shoes that Big Mama saved. She also had pictures of him.

I have a lot of memories of staying out at the ranch. The Hutchison family lived in Juliaetta, a small town not too far away. My Dad George had quit ranching and taken a job with the railroad. We were welcome at the ranch any time we wanted to visit. Big Mama named me LaVerne. She always called me Vernie. Grandpa Hall was the only grandfather I ever knew. He was always good to us. I can remember him hooking up a team of horses to a sleigh with bells on it. Snow covered the ground and he would drive us down to Juliaetta just like the song "Jingle Bells." it seemed like a long trip then.

Grandpa Hall was quite religious. He attended the United Brethren Church in Juliaetta. I think they were holy rollers. Big Mama attended the Baptist Church. They did not worship together. They both liked to go to tent meetings which were common in those days. Traveling evangelists would preach fire and brimstone. They would take me with them. I would enjoy all the excitement.

Grandpa Hall's pride and joy was a fancy black Buick with yellow wheels. It distinguished him as a prosperous successful farmer. Big Mama liked to dress in her finest and go places in that car. The roads were unpaved and dusty in those days. The car had expensive upholstery. To avoid the dust, every time Big Mama would pass a car or wagon she would roll up all the car windows tight.

Big Mama was quite a Southern Lady. Always had a Black Silk Dress ready to wear to town. She also carried a large white handkerchief to dust off even the slightest trace of soil on her or the children. She was a big tall imposing woman. She was quite heavy until, her fifties when she discovered she had diabetes. After that she

watched her diet, gave herself insulin shots twice a day and followed the shots with a soft boiled egg.

Big Mama loved to have her own money to spend. She hatched and raised white leghorn chickens as this species laid the most eggs. She could also order chicks by mail. An upstairs bedroom served as her hatchery. She had two incubators and kept them busy in the spring during hatching season. She was a hard worker. Each egg was scrubbed by hand with Bon Ami. Then they would be crated and taken to Kendrick or Lewiston to the market. Big Mama kept money in her pocket by doing this hard work.

Grandpa Hall also made extra money by selling cream. He would put out a 10 gallon can out by the mail box every day for pick up. Grandpa Hall was not the most efficient farmer. He worked hard but spent money before he would earn it. He didn't have the knack of pinching pennies that is required to succeed in business. There was always so much hard work to be done. Each day started early and work continued until sundown. In the evening we would listen to grandpa's radio that operated on batteries. I remember Amos and Andy. To save the batteries he was always careful to turn the radio off. He also received the Lewiston Tribune each day. That was one of the highlights.

My last visit to the ranch was in the fall of 1936. I took my new husband down to meet the family. Allan was a newcomer to ranching. The Dennlers were threshing wheat not too far from the house. They had a big stationary combine and would bring the sheaves of wheat to it. The separated wheat came out a spout and it was fascinating to watch the men who filled the sacks and then sewed them closed with rapid, deft strokes of a big needle. I don't think wheat is put in sacks anymore. The men who filled the big sacks had to be strong as each sack had to be picked up and shaken, to get the wheat to the bottom before the sack could be sewn closed.

Big Mama passed away in April 1943. Grandpa Hall passed away in June 1946.